

MINUTES OF THE SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 3 February 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Pauline Morrison (Chair), Andre Bourne, Colin Elliott, Alicia Kennedy, Pat Raven, Luke Sorba, Eva Stamirowski, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh and Alan Hall

APOLOGIES: Councillors David Michael

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member Resources), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services), Laura Butterworth (Senior Programmes Manager) (Safer London Foundation), Winston Castello (Community Enterprise Manager), Gary Connors (Strategic Community Safety Services Manager), Paul Gale (Local Assembly Manager), Barrie Neal (Head of Corporate Policy and Governance), Anna Reilly (Senior Young People's Advocate) (Safer London Foundation), Chief Supt Russell Nyman (Borough Commander) (Lewisham Police, MPS), Keeley Smith (Borough Commander) (London Fire Brigade) and Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2014

Resolved: to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Morrison – non-prejudicial – Borough Member of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

3. Borough Police and Fire Commanders

3.1 The Chair invited Chief Superintendent Russell Nyman (Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police Service, Lewisham) to provide an update on policing in Lewisham; the following key points were noted:

- He had been borough commander in Lewisham for the past two years and had recently found out that he would be moved to a different posting.
- He had also recently heard that the number of Chief Inspectors in Lewisham would reduce from six to four.
- The Local Policing Model had been in place for a year and implementation had been successful.
- There were now 159 neighbourhood officers in the borough.
- Crime figures were down for the third year in a row.
- There had been a significant decrease in burglaries – which had reduced by 39% in a year.
- Conversely, there had been a significant increase in the incidence of violence with injury.
- The increase in assaults was not confined to Lewisham. Neighbouring boroughs and local forces across London had struggled to reduce this type of crime.

- The quarterly survey of public attitudes to policing indicated that the confidence with policing in Lewisham was running high. The five year low for confidence in local policing had been 31% and the five year high for local policing had been 63%. The current level was 61%.
- Confidence had improved by 15% in the last two quarters.

3.2 Keeley Smith (Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade) provided an update to the Committee about the fire service in Lewisham. Information was circulated at the meeting, which set out the fire appliance attendance times for wards previously covered by Downham fire station; the following key points were noted:

- The Committee had previously expressed its concern about the Fifth London Safety Plan proposal to close Downham fire station. The plan had been implemented and Downham fire station had been closed.
- The attendance time figures for the areas previously covered by Downham fire station were better than those that had been modelled in the LSP5 proposals.
- First appliance attendance times were mostly within the target time of six minutes.
- Attendance times for second fire engines in Downham, Forest Hill, Sydenham and Whitefoot were outside the target time (eight minutes)
- The LFB still had better attendance times than many other forces in the country.

3.3 Keeley Smith (Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- An appliance from Forest Hill station was being utilised elsewhere in order to provide emergency fire cover during strike periods in the on-going industrial action. Attendance times in Forest Hill and Sydenham had reduced as a result, particularly second appliance attendance times.
- The second appliance would be away from Forest Hill during the whole period of industrial action.
- However, the Borough also had the use of an additional fire engine in New Cross – due to the current rebuilding of the Old Kent road fire station.
- The fire fighters based at Forest Hill continued to be involved in prevention work – when they had time available.
- The deployment of additional fire engines was a decision for incident commanders. The number of fire engines mobilised was determined by the type of incident. Additional engines might also be despatched, dependent on conditions at the scene of the incident.
- Fire fighters might wait for the attendance of the second appliance (and additional fire fighters) before entering a building in some instances; however, this was based on judgement of the risks associated with the incident.
- The Service's mobilising system identified the nearest fire appliance regardless of the Borough- because the areas covered by fire stations did not mirror borough boundaries.
- Fire appliances were moved strategically, dependent on the incidents they were attending as well as other incidents and deployments in the area.
- In the case of a large fire, the borough would not be left without cover. If appliances were moved out of the borough, other engines would provide coverage.

- It was not known if engines were mobilised as far away as the Shard at London Bridge; or if the Shard was responsible for excessive numbers of false alarms.
- Each borough commander worked with those responsible to deal with repeat false alarms.
- The LFB had developed a procedure for charging organisations that repeatedly called fire fighters to release people shut in lifts.
- The LFB and MPS worked in partnership with the Council – and looked for ways to work more closely together.

3.4 Russell Nyman (Borough Commander, MPS Lewisham) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- He had not heard of any plans to ask borough commanders to cover two boroughs, although the idea had previously been talked about.
- The MPS was required to save 20% of its budget by 2016, so there would be a wide range of proposals being put forward.
- Approximately 85-90% of the cost of policing was spent on staffing – so there would be a staffing impact of achieving the 20% saving.
- There were some difficult decisions facing the MPS as it attempted to deliver savings and continue to improve performance.
- There remained a need to carry out stop and search – based on the balance of risks.
- The MPS in Lewisham had adopted a robust approach with officers carrying out stops.
- The force had halved the number of stop and searches in the borough in the past two years.
- It was expected that 20% of stop and searches should result in seizure (of weapons or drugs) in Lewisham the figure was 23%.

Resolved: to note the updates from the borough commanders; to request additional information from the borough fire commander about the profile of incidents in Lewisham Central ward.

4. Violence against women and girls review

4.1 Anna Reilly (Senior Young Person's Advocate) and Laura Butterworth (Senior Programme's Manager) from the Safer London Foundation introduced a presentation; the following key points were noted:

- The Empower programme provided intensive support for young women and girls affected by sexual violence and exploitation.
- The programme had also developed training for professionals, workshops for parents and sessions for young men.
- In Lewisham the programme had funding to support six women a year.
- There were common features to the pattern of sexual violence and exploitation:
 - Perpetrators are predominantly male, victims predominantly female
 - Takes place between people who are known to each other
 - Used as a means of boys and young men exerting power and control over girls and young women
- There were also common patterns of exploitation and violence by gangs, groups and peers – for different reasons:
 - Gang-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse (sexual exploitation is not the main reason the gang is formed)

- Group sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse (group exists online or in person for the purpose of sexual exploitation)
- Peer-on-peer sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse (sexual exploitation by children and young people on other children and young people)
- The Safer London Foundation had seen a rise in peer on peer violence, as well as sexual bullying in schools
- There was not any particular ethnicity to perpetrators
- It was recognised that there were low numbers of disclosures from young women and very few that led to prosecution of perpetrators.
- There was also very little information about sexual violence towards young men
- Group work programmes had identified that rape and sexual violence were seen as 'easy' ways to retaliate against other groups or gangs.
- Experience demonstrated that perpetrators carried out sexual assaults and rape because they could harm other gangs or groups of young people without having to carry weapons.
- There was also an attitude amongst offenders that the police did not prosecute for rape.
- Gang members could also receive status in the form of 'ratings' for the number of times they had been stabbed and survived, which limited the significance of stabbing in gang conflicts.
- Safer London Foundation worked in 12 boroughs – young people had no compulsion to work with the foundation.
- The programme had a high engagement rate – with 90% of young people starting the scheme also finishing.
- The Foundation used a trauma based model of support based on therapeutic methods.

4.2 Anna Reilly (Senior Young Person's Advocate) and Laura Butterworth (Senior Programmes Manager) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The Empower programme had a high number of successful outcomes; further information could be provided about the effectiveness of the programme.
- It was not the intent in every case to move women away from their current situation. This might be impractical for a number of reasons. The focus was on improving women's resilience.
- The programme retained contact with people who had completed it successfully; a substantial number wanted to become programme ambassadors or young advisors – in order to support other girls or young women in similar situations.
- Young women were involved in intensive 1:1 sessions and group work. There were also separate sessions for young women and young men. In many cases young people found it easier to discuss issues separately.
- Young carers and young people who had recently been bereaved were at significant risk of sexual violence and exploitation. The reasons for this were not known.
- Many of the young people who came into contact with the programme had witnessed situations of domestic violence. The risk factors associated with young men involved in violence and young women affected by gang violence were similar.

- Work in schools did not take place consistently. The Safer London Foundation advocated a whole school approach, which incorporated work with professionals, parents and community leaders.
- Some work had also started in primary schools – which was not about sex education or violence – but explored issues of consent and acceptable behaviour.
- Support from the Committee was welcomed.
- The programme could always use additional resources to expand the scope and the scale of the work being carried out.
- Empower had been successful in receiving the MOPAC victims funding in Lewisham.
- There were also 13 Home Office funded positions nationally.
- The programme had been successful at working with young women and girls who were facing complex sets of challenges and were sometimes labelled as ‘difficult’ by others.
- The approach was centred on the needs of engaging the young women and girls where they are safe.
- The programme used a holistic model of support - which was based on an understanding of the effects of trauma and was supported by therapeutic methods.
- Services were confidential, non-judgemental & service user led.
- Engagement with the programme was voluntary.
- Safer London Foundation also offered CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) coordination in other boroughs.
- It was recognised that prevention was a key part of keeping girls and young women safe.
- Empower workers were able to act as a link between other partners, supporting young women's access to services and developing a stable relationship with victims/
- There were low levels of reporting and conviction for sexual violence and exploitation. Crown Prosecution Lawyers could be encouraged to take a practical view about evidence and support for witnesses.

4.3 Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People) highlighted the Council’s ‘wider strategic vision’ for tackling violence against women and girls and reiterated the difficulties faced in bringing cases to conviction.

4.4 The Committee reflected on the work that the Safer London Foundation was doing and highlighted its support for the approach and its effectiveness.

4.5 Members also commented on the prevalence of knife crime and gang violence – as well as attitudes to young women in general.

4.6 The Committee discussed work in schools and questioned whether there was further work that could be done.

4.7 The Chair thanked both expert witnesses for their presentation and answers to questions.

Resolved: to note the information from the Safer London Foundation for the review.

5. Lewisham Future Programme

5.1 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the budget savings report, focusing on the equalities implications; the following key points were noted:

- Two thirds of the equalities impacts identified fell in a small number of proposals.
- 38 proposals had equalities implications – 6 had high levels of impact and most were low or neutral.
- All proposals, including delegated decisions had equalities implications included.
- There were a significant number of staff implications that were not available yet.
- Consultation had begun in some cases – but had not yet been completed.

5.2 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) and Aileen Buckton (Executive Director of Community Services) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

Equalities

- Work was not carried out on ‘secondary linked equalities impacts’ such as the combined impact of reductions in mental health provision on trans people.
- The equalities impacts of the staffing restructures would not be known until after decisions had been taken on savings proposals.
- The Head of Human Resources would bring back a report in the summer about the impact on staffing – as part of the scrutiny of the annual employment profile.
- The report from the Head of HR would also include analysis of employment trends over a number of years.
- Available data about staff had been included in relevant savings pro-formas.
- Equalities assessments were carried out by gathering all the information about service users and determining whether or not there might be disproportionate impacts on some groups.
- In cases where everyone would be affected by a change (such as adult social care) analysis was carried out to see if the changes would disproportionately impact on some service users.
- The quality and validity of equalities analysis was checked by senior management teams.
- Where multiple impacts from the range of different areas of Council provision were identified for one person or family – then officers would take supportive action.

5.3 The Committee also discussed the broadness of the term ‘disability’ and how this might apply to different people.

The Broadway theatre

- The Broadway was a listed theatre, which was in need of significant capital investment in order to make it a viable space for modern productions.
- There were also limited facilities in the theatre for commercial use.
- Building services (heat and power) at the theatre were closely linked to services in the Council’s civic suite.
- The most significant problem was the lack of access at the rear of the theatre.

- The intention was not to close the theatre.
- There had been a number of reports in recent years about future viability options for the future of the theatre.
- It was felt that the theatre could form an essential part of a vibrant night time economy – but only if there was significant investment.
- The future of the theatre would be part of future plans for the development of Catford.
- It was proposed to focus future efforts on two short seasons of theatre.
- Consideration would also be given to allowing community organisations to use the theatre.
- The consultation being proposed would take into account the importance of the theatre to black and BME theatre groups.
- Consultation would be required with staff and community groups.
- The proposal had not been put forward because of the health and safety concerns highlighted by the Health and Safety Committee.
- Much of the health and safety work was completed in November – before the discussion at the Committee.
- This was not a new proposal; similar proposals had been put forward in previous budget rounds.

Main grants

- The consultation on the savings proposal for the main grants programme had been extended – there weren't any additional relevant submissions to the consultation.
- Submissions for main grant funding would close shortly, they would be evaluated and recommendations would be made to Mayor and Cabinet.
- In the past the Committee had received information about the funds being allocated in the different funding streams and some examples of the grants being allocated.
- Decisions about funding would be taken by Mayor and Cabinet Contracts.
- Organisations had an opportunity to appeal their level of funding.
- Local assemblies organising groups would be asked to identify areas of importance for community development – but there was no provision for grant giving decisions to be delegated to assemblies.
- Community development organisations would have to demonstrate that they would be able to work with local groups to identify local issues. It would be strange if organisations came forward with preconceived ideas about what they'd deliver for the community without having input from the community first.

Community development savings

- The savings to the community development budget would be from the arts festivals and events.
- Black history month would remain, as would events where the Council was able to lever external funding.
- There would be an increased projection for funding from the car park at Glass Mill leisure centre to subsidise facilities there.
- There would be a reduction in the leisure management budget – which would not have an impact on service delivery.
- There would also be a salaries saving through the deletion of empty posts – as a result of efficiency in the work of the combined culture and community development teams.

Youth offending service

- Work had taken place over a number of years to increase the efficiency of the service and move it to paperless working.
- The court service expected all boroughs to move to paperless working at the same time – it was also expected that if the service was audited – all of the information would be in the same place electronically, rather than in different paper files.

Blue badges

- The Committee discussed the proposal of charging for blue badges, noting views for and against charging.

5.4 The Chair adjourned the meeting for five minutes and Council officers were asked to leave the meeting room.

5.5 The Committee agreed the following referral be made to Public Accounts Select Committee:

The Committee recommends that the Public Accounts Select Committee reconsider savings proposal G1c: Blue Badge Administration Fee, with a view to finding an outcome that is cost neutral. The Committee notes the cost of each Blue Badge (£4.60, excluding the cost of administering the scheme) and the proposed charge being put forward (£10). The Committee does not believe that the Council should generate income from the implementation of this proposal.

The Committee endorses the recommendation of the Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel for the Public Accounts Select Committee to consider the two new savings proposals - L3: Community Development budgets and L4: Broadway theatre.

The Committee also recommends that the Public Accounts Select Committee consider the overall equalities implications of the savings proposals.

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee; the Cabinet Member for Resources was also asked to task officers with examining best practice in relation to employee equalities monitoring.

6. Local assemblies report

6.1 The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders until the completion of business.

6.2 Winston Castello (Community Enterprise Manager) and Paul Gale (Local Assemblies Manager) introduced a presentation; the following key points were noted.

- The assemblies programme provided a place for councillors, residents and local organisations to come together to solve collective issues in their area.
- 1/3 of people at assemblies found out about the programme from the newsletter.
- The programme faced future challenges; attracting more young people; remaining representative of their communities and dealing with diminished resources.

- There were many good examples of on-going work in the assemblies programme, including the approach to open decision making and neighbourhood planning in Crofton Park.

6.3 Paul Gale (Local Assemblies Manager), Winston Castello (Community Enterprise Manager) and Aileen Buckton (Executive Director for Community Services) responded to questions from the Committee; the following key points were noted:

- Work would need to take place with colleagues in planning about the development of neighbourhood plans.
- Information about section 106 funding would come to an assembly if there had been an eligible development in the ward. In some wards there had not been developments.
- The assemblies programme used innovative ways of engaging with local communities to ensure a broad range of people attended.
- Some events were specifically targeted at underrepresented areas of wards.
- An event would be held in the summer to bring all coordinating groups together.
- The assembly fund remained at £15k per assembly. £12.5k basic fund and £2.5k discretionary funding.

6.4 The Committee also discussed the item; the following key points were noted:

- Proposals for the future of parks should include assemblies, rather than just park user groups.
- Officers often seemed reluctant to attend local assemblies.
- Members would find it useful to know which areas of their wards were underrepresented at assemblies.

Resolved: to note the report; and to task officers with sharing information about good practice at a local assemblies event for all Councillors and members of coordinating groups.

7. Select Committee work programme

7.1 Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manger) introduced the report. The Committee discussed the programme for the meeting on 10 March, noting the timetable for the main grants programme and the difficulty this might cause in inviting organisations from the voluntary sector to provide information;

Resolved: to move items on provision for the LGBT community and the implementation of the Volunteering Strategy to the Committee's 2015/16 work programme – and to receive additional information about awareness raising and prevention work in schools for the Violence Against Women and Girls review.

8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views under item five to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Chair:

Date:
